

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3819

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR NATO IC

SUBJECT: FONMIN COMMENTS ON BASE NEGOTIATIONS

REF: REYKJAVIK 0865

1. FOLLOWING PRESS BRIEFING REPORTED REFTTEL ON FISHERIES
ISSUE, LONDON TIMES REPORTER ASKED FONMIN AGUSTSSON WHY
"FORMAL TALKS" HAD NOT YET BEGUN BETWEEN GOI AND USG OR
NATO ON BASE RETENTION ISSUE. AGUSTSSON REPLIED THAT "THE NATO
COUNCIL AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAVE ASKED FOR A DELAY."
WHILE ICELAND HAD AGREED TO THIS DELAY, HE DID NOT BELIEVE
MATTER COULD BE "DRAGGED OUT" MUCH LONGER BECAUSE "WE HAVE ONLY
SIX MONTHS." WHEN ASKED WHY HE THOUGHT DELAY HAD BEEN REQUES-
TED, HE SAID HE BELIEVED THEY WERE "REVIEWING THE SITUATION"
IN CONTEXT OF MILITARY AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATION AND NOT WITH
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REFERENCE TO FISHERIES DISPUTE.

2. WHEN ASKED WHAT AIM OF GOI IS IN RELATION TO BASE, AGUSTSSON REPLIED IT IS "TO GET RID OF THE DEFENSE FORCE, BUT WE ARE NEVERTHELESS WILLING TO LISTEN TO ARGUMENTS BY NATO COUNCIL AND U.S. GOVERNMENT." ASKED WHETHER GETTING RID OF BASE WOULD IN EFFECT MEAN WITHDRAWAL FROM NATO, HE SAID IT WOULD NOT BUT HIS PERSONAL AIM IS TO RETURN TO "ORIGINAL ARRANGEMENT" OF 1949-51, WHEN ICELAND HAD NATO MEMBERSHIP WITHOUT FOREIGN TROOPS.

3. WHEN ASKED IF "NOT HAVING FOREIGN TROOPS IN ICELAND WOULD MEAN THE SAME AS NOT HAVING THE BASE," AGUSTSSON SAID THAT WAS ONE OF THINGS WHICH WOULD REQUIRE STUDY AND THAT "IT WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME TO TRAIN ICELANDERS TO TAKE OVER FUNCTIONS NOW PERFORMED BY FOREIGNERS AT THE BASE." REPORTER THEN ASKED WHETHER IT WAS HIS AIM "TO HAVE THE TROOPS OUT BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR." WHEN AGUSTSSON ANSWERED, "YES," REPORTER PRESSED HIM FOR SPECIFICS BUT AGUSTSSON GAVE NONE. COMMENT: FONMIN HAS ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED HIS HABIT OF SAYING WHAT HE THINKS HIS AUDIENCE WANTS TO HEAR. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES, AS FONMIN HAS TOLD US IN PRIVATE, THAT FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES HE CANNOT PUBLICLY TAKE A STAND WHICH CAN BE INTERPRETED BY HIS COALITION PARTNERS AS RENEGING ON PARTY PLATFORM CONCERNING BASE ISSUE. TIMES REPORTERS ASKED EMB-OFF FOR CLARIFICATION ON TIMING OF NEGOTIATIONS, ESPECIALLY TIMING ON NATO REPORT. EMBOFF REPLIED HE COULD NOT REALLY COMMENT ON WHAT FONMIN HAD IN MIND. ALSO THAT NATO WOULD BE THE BODY TO BE ASKED FOR COMMENT ON TIMING OF ITS REPORT. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION REGARDING POSSIBLE SPEED-UP OF TROOP DEPARTURE, EMBOFF SAID WE BELIEVE THERE MUST BE MISUNDERSTANDING SINCE PRESENT AGREEMENT PROVIDES TERMINATION PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS BEYOND REVIEW PERIOD.
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